
Organization and Training For Mechanized Rifle Squads in Restrictive Terrain

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Mechanized rifle squads that must operate in restrictive terrain will perform better if they are specifically organized and trained for that environment. I offer here some techniques that have been used to prepare for the “de-file fight” on terrain found in such places as Korea and southern Europe, but which may be encountered anywhere in the world.

The organization of the Bradley infantry platoon has been the focus of some debate for the past few years. The addition of the M4 carbine, the M240B medium machinegun, and the Javelin antitank weapon have greatly increased the lethality and flexibility of the rifle

squads. The organization of these squads as depicted in Field Manual (FM) 7-7J, *The Mechanized Infantry Platoon and Squad (Bradley)*, does not address the changes in weapons and doctrine that have been introduced since the manual’s publication. The Infantry School is a proponent of the organization of two rifle squads and a five-member support element (2x9+5) per platoon. Although the concept is sound, the lack of resourcing, especially in personnel, keeps most units from fully exercising it.

One way to make the most of the flexibility and firepower of the platoon’s dismounted soldiers in severely

constrained units is the 1x9+5 (Figure 1), developed by the 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry, in Korea. This organization of the dismount section was developed to support the mission essential task list (METL) and use the new weapons to their maximum potential. The following are some of the considerations during the development of this organization:

- There are normally 12 to 15 riflemen per platoon in the unit, not the 23 required.
- The M4 carbine should be used as a shock weapon in the trenches and in urban terrain.
- The M240B provides firepower on

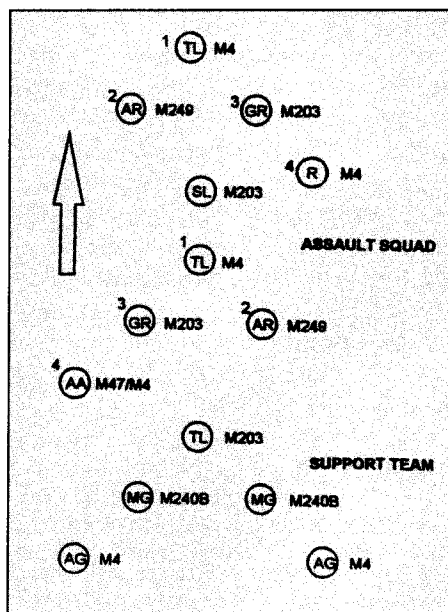


Figure 1

targets that Bradley fighting vehicles (BFVs) cannot service (which may be numerous in restrictive terrain).

- Selected leaders need to carry M203s for signaling and placing ground-burst illumination for use as target reference points (TRPs).

With these considerations in mind and basic infantry doctrine as a start point, the 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry, developed the structure shown in Figure 1. The nine-man assault squad is similar to the light infantry squad organization. The team leaders and riflemen carry M4 carbines for maximum maneuverability and accuracy in trench clearing and military operations on urban terrain (MOUT). The squad leader carries an M203 for signaling and directing the fires of the support team or the mounted section. The M249 light machineguns remain in the assault squad to provide local suppression or secure the top of the trench line as the team progresses. The rifleman (#4 man) has the primary responsibility for engaging targets with squad antitank weapons, depending on the mission.

The support team consists of two M240B machinegun teams and a team leader (sometimes a staff sergeant) with an M203. If two staff sergeants are assigned (as the basis for the two rifle squads) but an insufficient number of riflemen are present, the support team leader should be a staff sergeant. The

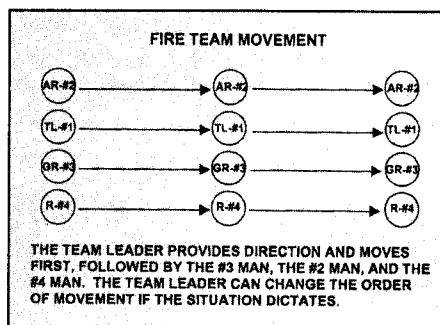


Figure 2

primary missions of the support team are to suppress the enemy on an objective to allow the assault team to move into position, and to suppress the enemy antitank gunners to allow the Bradleys to move through highly restrictive terrain such as rock-drops or ford sites. With the increase in firepower, rifle squads are better able to secure enemy dismounted avenues of approach. Once again, the element leader has an M203 for signaling and placing ground-burst illumination for use as TRPs. The primary job of the support team leader is to focus, distribute, and shift the fire of the two machineguns to best utilize their high rate of fire.

This type of organization enables the unit to integrate new soldiers into the

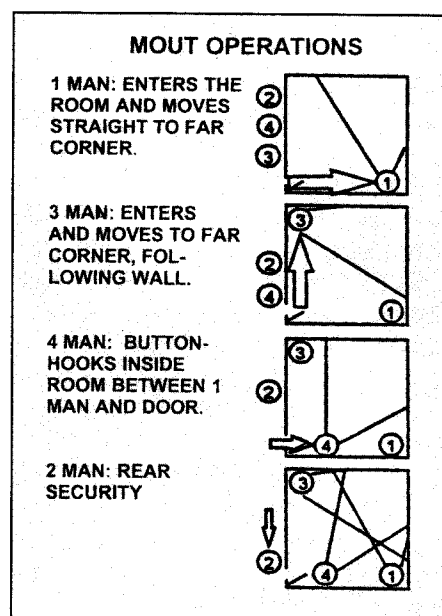


Figure 3

platoon quickly. Once a new soldier arrives and is given his position in the squad (#2 man SAW gunner in A Team), he immediately knows his position in MOUT, movement, trench clearing, and standardized drills (Figures 2 and 3). In the standing operating procedure (SOP) for bounding by buddy team, the team leader (#1 man) moves first and provides direction to his team.

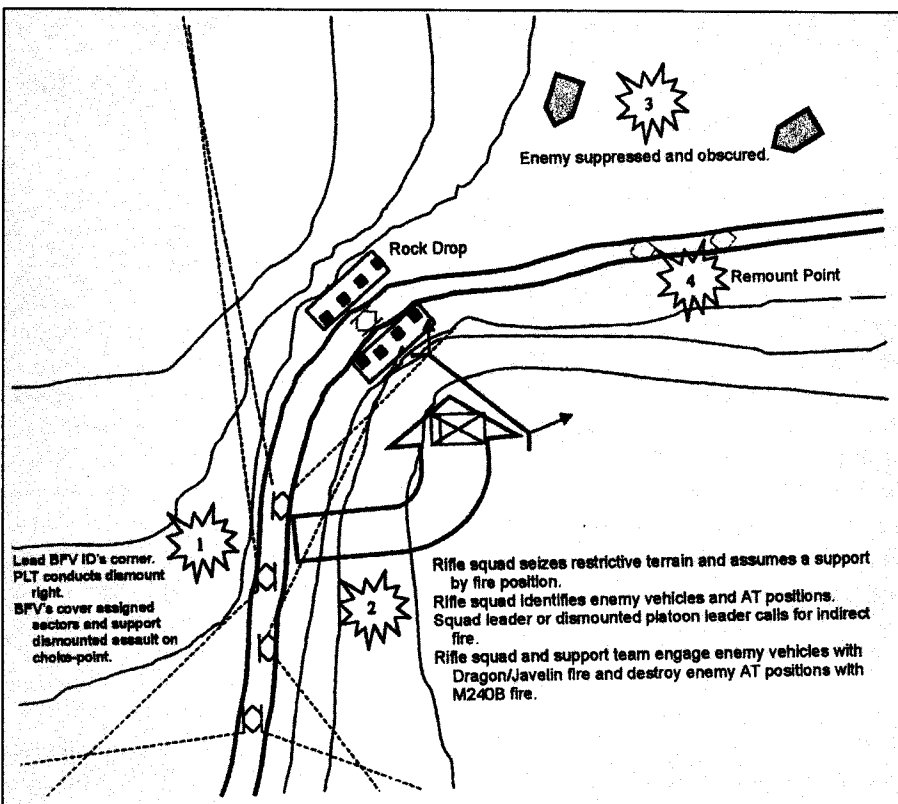


Figure 4

A standardized numbering system also allows for the movement of soldiers within the platoon and company without loss of continuity. This becomes especially important in units with a high turnover rate, such as the 2d Infantry Division or any other deployed infantry unit where there is an influx of soldiers from various units who are accustomed to different SOPs.

The training for dismounted squads must be carefully structured to prepare for the unique type of terrain on which they will fight. This training can be grouped into specialty skills, lethality, and collective training. Whenever possible, the training is conducted with the BFVs to increase the integration of mounted and dismounted elements.

The specialty skill training consists of the expertise that BFV rifle squads will need to fight in restrictive terrain. These skills include demolitions, combat lifesaver, and physical fitness. The most important of these is demolitions training. Due to the terrain, the BFVs are often forced to stay on the roads for extended distances, and something as simple as a mine or as complex as a rock-drop can bring the unit to a halt. The dismounted soldiers must have the training to deal with a variety of different types of charges and methods of breaching. From satchel charges to line charges to "ear muff" charges for concrete blocks, the dismounts must be able to assess, prepare, and execute numerous demolition tasks. Scheduling a demolitions range before a collective training cycle, then integrating breaching into the training is one way to keep the soldiers proficient in this highly perishable skill.

In mountainous terrain with little space for helicopter landing zones, more combat lifesavers are needed to sustain the casualties until ground evacuation is possible. If the unit is attacking up a single road through a defile, the traffic is moving in only one direction—forward—and it takes more time to get the casualty to the rear and more trained combat lifesavers to sustain life. If possible, every rifle squad member should become a combat lifesaver.

The battlefield also demands that

soldiers be physically fit, and battle focused physical training must be stressed to prepare them for exhausting movements in mountainous terrain. March-and-shoot exercises can help increase effectiveness. This training not only provides good physical training for the soldiers but also increases their marksmanship skills under stress. PT in combat gear, litter runs, and platoon competitions are other examples of challenging physical training.

Lethality training consists of weapons qualification and technique training. Weapons qualification is a continuing

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process that keeps the soldiers proficient on their assigned weapons and serves as a baseline for more complex training. Common deficiencies include failure to conduct nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) firing tasks and failure to zero AN/PVS-4 night vision equipment before firing the M249, M240B, and M60 under conditions of darkness. In addition to assigned weapons, selected soldiers also need to qualify on the hand grenade, AT4, M47, and M24 sniper. The technique training builds on qualification and increases a soldier's expertise and accuracy under varied conditions. Reflexive firing Tables I through IV (Familiarization, Advanced Familiarization, Qualification, and Target Discrimination) greatly increase the skills of soldiers who carry the M4 or M16. This training includes carry technique, stance, aim, shot placement, and trigger manipulation. After a soldier completes reflexive firing, he knows the natural point of aim for his weapon and can quickly engage and kill targets at close range during assaults and in trenches and buildings. M240B or M60 lethality training includes live-fire crew drills from elevated and undulating terrain under day and night conditions. Company snipers can increase their

lethality by practicing stress shooting and engaging moving targets in day and night scenarios.

Collective training for the dismounts is the culmination of all the preliminary weapons training and qualification, specialty skill training, and low level collective training conducted during sergeant's time. During the weekly sergeant's time training, the squads rehearse SOPs so they maximize training time by eliminating the initial (crawl) phase of training on the range. The dismounted gunner tables in FM 23-1 provide a good base for planning and executing collective training. Once the unit has conducted individual, buddy-team, team, and squad live fire exercises and the mounted crews are qualified on Bradley Table VIII, more complex and terrain-specific operations are possible. These operations include some platoon drills that are not covered in FM 7-7J Drill. Clearing around a corner is a specific drill that a Bradley platoon must master if it is to be successful in the "defile fight" (Figure 4). This drill consists of the platoon identifying the curve, dismounting, the dismounts advancing into the direction of the curve, eliminating any enemy anti-tank gunners overwatching the feature, suppressing enemy vehicles with Dragon or Javelin and indirect fire, then handing off targets to the BFVs as they turn the corner. Assaulting a rock-drop, clearing a ford site, and approaching a defile are other tasks units can train on before conducting operations in restrictive terrain.

These techniques are meant to supplement the current Army doctrine. The organization presented is a possible solution to the variety of challenges that are to be expected in operations through restrictive terrain. It worked well in the 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry, and it is worthy of consideration by other units as well.

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